



Summary :

A higher learning school founded in c. 1248 by the scholar Nikephoros Blemmydes in the area of Ematha, close to Ephesus. The school, which operated until 1272, was intended for hermit monks.

Date

C. 1248-1272

Geographical Location

Monastery of Ontos Theou in Ematha, close to Ephesus

1. Foundation and operation of the school

The school of higher education of [Nikephoros Blemmydes](#) was founded in c.1248 in the monastery of the Lord-Christ-Who-Is in the area of Ematha, close to [Ephesos](#). The school was intended for hermit monks and organized according to the pedagogical views of its founder. Although it trained future monks, classes were offered on all the subjects of the **liberal arts** and not only theology.

The rules of the school were codified in a **Typikon**, part of which has survived.¹ According to it, youths could enter the school at the age of ten, because, according to Blemmydes, at that age they were prepared enough to begin theological training.

2. Content of the studies

For the needs of teaching, Blemmydes composed a series of treatises, scientific as well as theological. At a first stage the school offered instruction in theology. A treatise of Blemmydes containing a commentary on the *Psalms* has survived, as well as a series of encomia, lives of saints etc. The students then received training in more demanding courses of philosophy and the sciences of the **quadrivium**. It is characteristic of the school that the students there were first trained in philosophy and subsequently in mathematics, a reversal of the normal order that prevailed in other institutions of that time.

The basic textbook for the teaching of philosophy was the *Epitome logica* («Εισαγωγικής επιτομής βιβλίον πρότον, περί λογικής») which was a synopsis of the Aristotelian *Organon* (it was based, that is, on the Aristotelian works *Categories*, *On Interpretation*, *Posterior Analytics*, *Prior Analytics*, *Topics* and *Sophistic Refutations*). For the teaching of the mathematical sciences the textbook was the *Epitome physica* («Εισαγωγικής επιτομής βιβλίον δεύτερον, περί φυσικής») which was also based on the Aristotelian tradition. Its contents follow the Aristotelian distinction of physical philosophy in the following headings: *Physics*, *On Generation and Corruption*, *On the Heavens*, *Meteorology*. Judging from Blemmydes' surviving works, geography was also taught in the school (through the textbooks *Ιστορία περί της γης εν συνόψει* [mean. «Concise History of the Earth»] and *Γεωγραφία συνοπτική* [mean. «Concise Geography»] or *Σύνοψις γεωγραφική* [mean. «Geographical Compendium»]), containing basic geographical information of the roundness of the earth, the types of climate, Earth's dimensions etc.), as well as physiology courses (main textbook the *Λόγος περί σώματος* [«Discourse on the Body»]) and ethics (textbook was the *Λόγος περί ψυχής* [«Discourse on the Soul»]).

3. Pedagogical principles

According to its founder, the school aimed at making better men, by the cultivation of proper character through training and education. The aim of its courses was to aid people to replace their irrational desires with an ethical will, something achieved through the acquisition of knowledge and the development of sound judgement. The basic method for the achieving virtuousness, the moral will, is constant exercise. At this point the pedagogical principles are apparently affected again by Aristotle's views on the matter, who argued that continuous practice aids the acquisition of the 'habit of virtue'.



Blemmydes' school had become so renowned that it could no longer accept all those wishing to study in it, as in the case e.g. of [Georgios Kyprios](#). It remained in operation in Hemathia after the [Recapture of Constantinople \(1261\)](#), for Blemmydes refused to relocate to the capital. Blemmydes wanted the school to continue to operate within the monastery, independently of the ecclesiastical power and the other monasteries. For this reason in his will he assigned an endowment amounting to 100 *litra*, which had been given to him as a gift by the emperor, to provide for the upkeep of his institution. After his death (1272), however, the [Patriarchate of Constantinople](#) appropriated Blemmydes' endowment, while the monastery became a *metochion* of the Monastery of the [mount Galesios](#).

1. Partial edition in Νικηφόρος Βλεμμύδης, *Του αυτού Νικηφόρου μοναστού και πρεσβυτέρου, του κτήτορος, περί των κατ' αυτόν διήγησις μερική*, Heisenberg, A. (ed.), *Curriculum Vitae et Carmina* (Leipzig 1896), pp. 93-99.

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	Τατάκης Β.Ν. , <i>Βυζαντινή φιλοσοφία</i> , Αθήνα 1997, Καλπουρτζή, Ε. (μτφρ.)
	Νικηφόρος Βλεμμύδης , <i>Νικηφόρου του Βλεμμύδου τα ευρισκόμενα πάντα</i> , Migne, J.-P. (ed.), <i>Patrologia Graeca 142</i> , Paris 1885
	Νικηφόρος Βλεμμύδης , <i>Διήγησις μερική</i> , Munitiz, J.A. (ed.), <i>Nicephori Blemmydae Opera, Corpus Christianorum - Series Graeca 13</i> , Turnhout 1984

Webliography :

	Νικηφόρος Βλεμμύδης http://www.bautz.de/bbkl/n/nikephorus_blemmydes.shtml
	Τυπικόν της μονής του Θεού Όντος http://www.doaks.org/publications/doaks_online_publications/typikaPDF/typ048.pdf



Glossary :

	liberal arts
Secular or classical education, as opposed to ecclesiastical education.	
	litra (lat. libra)
A unit of weight varying according to size. The most common was the "logarike litra", established at the time of Constantine I in 309-310 as the basis of the monetary system. It was estimated as weighing <i>ca.</i> 324 or 319 g and was divided into 72 golden coins (solidi). One hundred litrai made a kentenarion.	
	metochion
In the Byzantine period, <i>metochion</i> meant the estate that was conceded to a monastery for income purposes and operated as its dependency. Usually the <i>metochia</i> were located far from the monastery to which they belonged and included various structures, such as churches, hospices etc.	
	quadrivium
The quadrivium comprised the four mathematical subjects (arithmetic, geometry, music and astronomy) that were taught as a necessary part of higher education in Byzantium.	
	typikon
Foundation document of a monastery compiling the rules regarding its administrative organization and liturgical rituals, as well as the comportment inside a cenobitic monastery. The monastic typika could also include the biography (<i>vita</i>) of the monastery founder along with a catalogue of the movable or immovable property of the monastery. They constitute an important source for the study of the monastic life, while at the same time they shed light on many aspects of the Byzantine society. The liturgical typika were calendars with instructions for each day's services, liturgical books with rules arranging the celebration rituals.	

Sources

Νικηφόρος Βλεμμύδης, *Διήγησις μερική*, Munitiz, J.A. (ed.), *Nicephori Blemmydae Opera* (Corpus Christianorum – Series Graeca 13, Turnhout 1984), 65.44.1-45.8.

Γεώργιος Ακροπολίτης, *Χρονική Συγγραφή*, Heisenberg, A. – Wirth, P. (eds), *Georgii Acropolitae Opera 1* (Stuttgart 1978), 50.2-6.

Quotations

Nikephoros Blemmydes on the foundation of the monastery at Ematha:

Καὶ οἱ μὲν, ἐκ Νυμφαίου, πρὸς τὰ σφίσιν αὐτοῖς ἀποτεταγμένα σκηνώματα μεταβαίνουσιν, ἡμεῖς δ' ἐξ Ἐφέσου, πρὸς Παλαιστίνην ὁρῶμεν, καὶ πόθον ἀρχαῖον ἀποπληροῦμεν, καὶ τετανικοῦ πάθους ἀπαλαττόμεθα. Κάκειθεν ἐπανιόντες, καὶ τὴν τοῦ προεστηκότος ὁσίαν ὀσιοπρεπῶς ἐκτελέσαντες, καὶ πᾶσαν αὐτοῦ κέλευσιν περατώσαντες, καὶ πολλαῖς καὶ βαρεῖαις προσομιλήσαντες θλίψεσιν, ἐν τε τοῖς δυσμικωτέροις εἴνεκα βίβλων ἀναδιφήσεως καὶ διεξελεύσεως ὧν πρώην πείραν οὐκ ἔσχομεν ἀφιγμένοι, καὶ πολυμετρήτου παρὰ τῶν ἀρχαίων ἐκείσε λαχόντων ἀπολελαυκότες φιλοφροσύνης (ἀντιμετρήσαι Κύριος αὐτοῖς ὡς οἶδεν οὗτος τοῖς εὖ ποιοῦσιν ἀντιμετρεῖν), καὶ τοῦ σκοποῦ τετυχηκότες ὡς οὐκ ἔδει βελτιώως, καὶ αὐτὸς γεγεννημένοι πρὸς τὰ κατ' Ἐφεσον, ἡσυχίας δειμασθαι καταγώγιον προθυμούμεθα. Καὶ γῆν ἐν τοῖς Ἡμαθίοις εὐρηκότες, ἀπερρηγμένην οἶον τῆς ὁμοχώρας, ψαλμικῶς εἶπεν ἔρημον ἄβατον ἄνυδρον, αἰσθητῶν θηρίων καὶ νοητῶν ἐνδιαίτημα, κυκλομένην μὲν συνοικισμοῖς ἐκ δὲ τοῦ πορρωτέρω, καὶ τὸ μὲν ἐφόδοις ληστρικαῖς, τὸ δὲ θορόβοις οὔσαν ἀπρόσιτον, ἀλλὰ καὶ λυμαντικῶν ἐρπετῶν καθαρεύουσιν, πρὸς δὲ καὶ δαψιλοῦς μετέχουσιν φωτὸς ἐκ τῆς θέσεως, τῷ συνιστᾶν ἐν ταύτῃ τὸ ἡσυχαστήριον ἐπιβάλλομεν.

Munitiz, J.A. (ed.), *Nicephori Blemmydae Opera* (Corpus Christianorum – Series Graeca 13, Turnhout 1984), 65.44.1-45.8.

Historian George Akropolites's account of Blemmydes as a teacher:

ἐκείνου δὲ τελευτήσαντος μετὰ τὴν εἰς ἡμᾶς τῶν ποιημάτων σαφήνειαν καὶ τὴν τῆς τῶν λόγων τέχνης διδασκαλίαν, παρὰ τὸν Βλεμμύδην Νικηφόρον, ὃν τότε πάντες οἶδαμεν τῶν ἄλλων τελεώτερον ἐν ταῖς κατὰ φιλοσοφίαν ἐπιστήμαις, ἐφοίτησά τε αὐτὸς καὶ ὅσοι σὺν ἐμοὶ ἐτελοῦντο τὰ λογικά.



Heisenberg, A. – Wirth, P. (eds), *Georgii Acropolitae Opera* 1 (Stuttgart 1978), 50.2-6.